

THE RISING SONS



It was the summer of 1967, and I was going to celebrate my 16th birthday in Bismarck, North Dakota. My mom, my sister Tina, my very best friend Lisa, and myself, had all traveled by train to Spokane, Washington, where my Dad picked us up to begin our 'road trip' summer vacation. Dad worked the telephone lines as a construction engineer supervisor making sure that buildings were properly built to house the Microwave towers. Our first stop was Billings, Montana where we enjoyed the motel pool and sightseeing the historic battles that had taken place during the Wild West. Travel days were on the road before 6 am to beat any rush or problems. Not an easy task for 3 teenage girls and no breakfast until we had the road under our wheels. Dad had a supply of beef jerky and water in the back seat to hold us over. Once we hit Bismarck we had 4 days to sun tan and hang out at the pool without worrying about sore bums and jerky. Our motel was U shaped with a great pool in the middle and once we threw our bags into the rooms, stripped to our bathing suits, we ran for cool water and leaped in without hesitation.

Our neighbors happened to be lounging at the pool as well and once Lisa and I popped up our heads out for air, like seals, we saw that our neighbors were a group of young men, long haired, cool looking, drinking beer and laughing. So this was one of those almost 16 year old girl moments where all the hormones start to rush into your brain and your alter ego, Elsie, comes out. Now, how do we get out of the pool without drawing any attention to ourselves and how to look like mature younger women rather than almost 16? It was not going to happen, given our old fashion one piece athletic style suits and my little sister screaming "Terri, Lisa, Dad wants to see you now". There is always someone to remind you that you are not cool.

As it turned out the guys were a travelling rock band called "The Rising Sons". Could this be any better for two young girls who sang show tunes together and considered themselves up and coming stage singers? And it was going to be my birthday while we were all here. Finally, fate had shined a light on this vacation.

Of course, my Dad made it his business to get to know the 'boys' and then completely scared the crap out of them, warning that if they touched either of us they would live to regret it. Dad was tough, living on his own since 15, growing up poor with 5 brothers, travelling the world and now working with crews of young guys like this who were always looking for trouble with women. He made it clear that we were not women even if we thought we were. They had a concert in town at the local hall and we really wanted to go. Neither of us had been to a 'rock concert' before and it was our job over the next 2 days to convince Dad that we should go, as a life experience.

Over the next few days we all sat at the pool, played cards, drank sodas and got to know one another. My Mom convinced Dad that we should go and the band explained to Dad that we could stay backstage and on the side stage to watch the performance where we would be out of harm's way.

So that Saturday night all dressed up in our best pedal pushers and tank tops, my Dad drove us to the town hall for our first concert.

For us it was amazing and a memory we would keep forever. Their final song was, "There is a house in New Orleans, they call the Rising Sun," and it brought the place down dancing and screaming. My Dad promptly picked us up at the exact time of 11pm and we did not complain.

Sunday was my 16th birthday and after a long day of swimming and lounging about, my parents brought KFC and drinks back to the poolside for all of us, band and family, to sit and enjoy as our last meal together. The band brought out a birthday cake, lit up, singing Happy Birthday to me, with a card signed personally from all the crew and band. What a great birthday and both Lisa and I still remember those Rising Sons and our first concert. Somewhere in my 'old stuff box', I still have the card and the song is still one of my all time favorites, along with Louie, Louie and Whiter Shade of Pale. Great songs, like memories, never die.

